

# PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

## Ludwig Modular Trio Drum Kit

by Bob Saydowski, Jr.

Ludwig has been through some changes lately. Recently acquired by The Selmer Company after many years of being family-owned, Ludwig has totally re-vamped some stages of their hardware, and have come out with many new products. Here, we take a look at Ludwig's *Modular Trio* kit.

Ludwig's shells are 6-ply hardwood with no reinforcing rings. The plies are joined by a die-mold process, butted at three locations with a lacquer-coated interior. All the shells in this kit were perfectly constructed and sanded. And these drums are heavy!

Components of the *Modular Trio* kit are: 16x22 bass drum, 11x12, 12x13, 13x14 tom-toms, 16x16 floor tom-tom, 6 1/2 x 14 *Supra-Phonic* metal snare drum, and *Hercules* hardware.

### BASS DRUM

The 22" bass drum has 20 lugs, curved T-handle rods, and wooden hoops painted black with silver-sparkle inlay. Since this drum is 16" deep, instead of the conventional 14", Ludwig has mounted two pairs of spurs on the shell. The spurs are curved, 1/2" thick square steel with backing plates, locked in place with a plastic hand screw. They have massive rubber tips which can be removed to expose spike points. For packing, the spurs disappear into their brackets. Double spurs certainly give extra stability, and this drum stayed in place easily.

Fitted on the batter side is a *Silver Dot Clear* with a transparent head on the front. A felt strip is installed behind the batter head. Power bass drums have always scared me a bit, because of their tendency to "boom" a bit too much. This 16x22 drum did resonate nicely, but did not "boom." More dampening would be needed, however, for modern playing, or for miking. A clip-on bass drum muffler

works well here to give the drum a nice round tone, while retaining volume. The kit is available with a 16 x 24 bass drum.

### MOUNTING SYSTEM

I imagine the bass drum must have some strength to it, because installed on the top is the *Modular Triple* holder, designed to hold three drums. Ludwig does make a stabilizer, but only for use with double bass drums to connect them together. I do wish they'd make a shell-support stabilizer.

A single, triangle-shaped receiver with backing plate accepts a one-inch diameter tube, which is the base post of the holder. The height of the down tube is arrested by a large plastic hand screw which presses against a steel strip inside the receiver hole. The down tube is fitted with Ludwig's *Quik-Set* memory lock: a thick metal ring resembling Pearl's *Lok-Stop*, being drum key-operated, but with two side lips instead of one in front. The lips fit into corresponding slots on the receiver block. The *Quik-Set* ring offers an exact set-up every time, and assists in keeping the holder tube from twisting (a logical step up from Ludwig's old hose clamps).

Atop the tube is another triangle-shaped casting with three holes, each one accepting a tom-tom pistol arm. The short end of the arm has wide-spaced grooves. This end passes through the casting hole and is held in place by two drum key-operated set screws. The other end of the arm is quite long, and protrudes a smaller triangle casting on the drum shell. It is fitted with a *Quik-Set* lock and secured with a set screw. The drum's receiver also has a metal backing plate. Angle adjustment is accomplished by an 80-tooth ratchet, giving a variety of angles. Small gauge markings are cut into the ratchet sides for use as an angle memory. The ratchet is adjusted by a hex nut—still! I would think that Ludwig would have changed to a hand screw, or even a key-operated screw; but they still have the hex nut, which requires a separate tool, another thing to misplace.



The *Triple* holder retails at \$209.00 and is the most expensive holder on the market. Once set up, the holder will not drift from its position or shake about. I do feel that there are perhaps too many separate adjustments to be made and, after set-up, some are difficult to get to. I also found I could not get the middle tom-tom to the forward angle I wanted. Ludwig should consider lengthening the down tube on this holder. It is too short to allow acute angles, especially on the middle drum, if you sit low.

### TOM-TOMS

All mounted toms in this kit are double-headed "power" toms. The 11x12 and 12x13 drums have 16 lugs each; the 13x14 has 20 lugs. The 16x16 floor tom has 16 lugs, and three legs which are secured in their brackets by wing screws. They all have regular triple-flanged pressed hoops, though Ludwig does offer optional die-cast hoops for the batter sides (\$150 extra). None of the toms have mufflers installed, excepting the floor tom. Oddly enough, the adjustment knob turned much too tight, and bound up before contact was made with the head. The drums came fitted with *Silver Dot Clear* batters and *Heavy Clear* bottoms. For modern playing, the toms definitely need some sort of dampening as they are very resonant. Changing to thicker batter heads gave more punch and attack to the drums. Again, these drums literally explode when you play them.

### SNARE DRUM

Ludwig includes their 6 1/2 x 14 seamless metal shell *Supra-Phonic* snare drum with the *Trio* kit. It has an anti-galvanic chrome finish, ten double-ended lugs, 20-strand wire snares and regular hoops. (Die-cast hoops are available.) An internal muffler is installed which worked better than the floor tom's. The strainer is a simple side-throw model and works quietly and efficiently. The drum came fitted with a *Coated Medium Rocker* batter. Like all

*Supra-Phonic* drums, the snare was crisp, but had depth. Of all the metal-shelled drums on the market, the *Supra-Phonic* has to be *the one*. The shell is lightweight in comparison with the rest of the drums in this kit, but it cuts through beautifully.

Die-cast hoops are available in all sizes. They have a cross-ribbed, twin-channel design with *no* ears at the tension rod areas; just a completely circular hoop contacting the head all around its diameter. The snare side hoops have open gates. Die-cast hoops have a slightly different sound than pressed hoops; somewhat more of a 'clonky' sound. However, they're great for rim shots. Unfortunately, the die-cast hoops were not included on this test kit, but they did come with two new snare drum models I saw.

The 8 x 14 *Slotted* snare is a variation on Hinger's *Space-Tone* drum. This drum has a 6-ply wood shell, but unlike the Hinger, does not expand. It has a 3/4" wide slot going around the drum, providing total venting. The *Slotted* Snare has 12 double-ended lugs, counterlock nuts on the batter side to combat rod loosening, and the *P-85 Supra-Phonic* strainer. Even though the drum is 8" from hoop to hoop, it doesn't sound like a regular 8" drum. Air is released quickly through the slot space before the entire shell can vibrate. It retails at \$481.00.

For those players looking for beautiful appearance, Ludwig has introduced the *Hammered Series* shells. The drum I saw was a 6 1/2 x 14 with 10 double-ended lugs, and a *P-85* strainer. It has a seamless bronze shell which is hammered around its exterior, giving a gold-plated appearance. Fitted with an *Ensemble Medium Coated* batter, the drum was crisp and similar in sound to the *Supra-Phonic*. But the cosmetic value of this drum is its main attraction. The 6 1/2" *Hammered Series* snare lists at \$423.00. The *Hammered Series* also includes *Super-Sensitive* snares, tympani, *Chrome-O-Wood* marching drums, and the *Chrome-O-Wood Big Beat* drum kit.

#### HARDWARE

The *Hercules* line of hardware comes with the *Trio* kit. All stands have the capability for *Quik-Set* locks. Although none are included, they are available separately. Tubular tripod bases are found on all the stands, with large rubber feet, and a wide stance.

The 1374 snare stand is of the traditional basket design. Angle adjustment is done via a flat swivel, locked with a hand screw. The stand holds the drum securely, but owners of deep snare drums should beware: this stand will not go low enough to accommodate an 8" drum, or a 6 1/2" drum if you sit low.

The 1131 hi-hat has an adjustable internal spring, and a split footboard. Beneath the heel plate of the footboard is what

Ludwig calls *Spur-Lok*; a jagged-cut piece of metal which grips any surface and keeps the stand from sliding. There is also another spur, this time a metal point, at the base of the frame. This stand has an easy, quiet action, and will go high enough for most any player.

Two boom cymbal stands are included. They have one adjustable tier, and a two-piece boom arm, one telescoping inside the other. Angle adjustment for the arm is done with a flat swivel, while the tilter angle operates on a ratchet. The stand is sturdy and can easily hold large cymbals without tipping forward. There is enough length on the boom arm to enable set-up from practically anywhere around the kit.

Ludwig also has a whole range of modular accessories including outrigger stands for cymbals and toms which connect to the bass drum shell; add-on cymbal, cymbal boom, tom-tom/bongo boom holders, auxiliary closed hi-hat, cowbell cluster holder, mono-pod snare stand, and microphone adaptors. They also offer floor toms suspended on stands instead of legs, and overhead floor toms.

Ludwig's *Speed King* pedal has been around since 1937. It has a one-piece footboard with a reversible heel plate, and two enclosed compression springs. Tension can be adjusted with a screwdriver for the slotted screws underneath the pedal's spring chambers. This is not very convenient from the playing position, as the pedal must be totally removed from the drum hoop to adjust tension. The *Speed King* has a metal connecting link and a ball bearing rocker. The footboard connects to the frame via a stretch plate which hooks into a slot at the frame base. Clamping is done with a wing screw/claw plate. A felt beater is included. There are no other adjustments on the pedal, and I guess that's what makes the *Speed King* what it is. It has one of the most natural actions around.

#### FINISHES

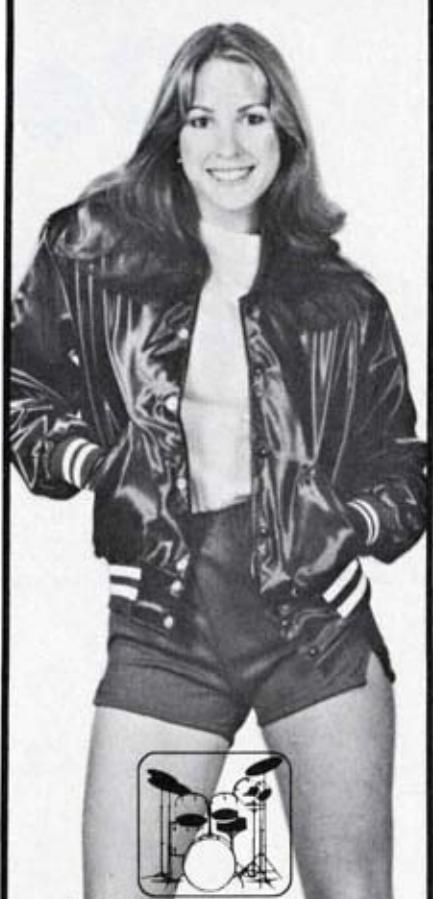
Ludwig offers a total of seventeen finishes, including two wood finishes. The kit tested was in *Chrome-O-Wood*, just like the one pictured in the mini-catalog. The chrome finish looks good. It's certainly an attention-getter. If you do choose chrome, keep in mind that every little fingerprint shows up. This finish requires extra care to look its best.

The company now does an interesting thing with their finish seams: To keep it from peeling, Ludwig has studded the seam line with the stud heads matching the kit's finish. It's a good idea, though sometimes, a seam line might face the audience, and that really doesn't look too good.

The *Modular Trio* kit is priced at \$2220 for Pearl, Cortex, or *Chrome-O-Wood* finish. Wood finishes, or Multi-Color patterns, are \$2385. Substitution of a 24" bass drum is an extra \$50.00.

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